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USCINCENT//CCPA, USCENCOM REAR MACDILL AFB FL
STATE PASS TO AID

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON MIDDLE EAST

Summary

-- A lead story in all papers today, June 17, focuses on Israel's establishment of the "dividing wall" between Israel and the West Bank. A number of commentaries lash out at Israel's "racist" policy. Another front-page story, without commentary, highlights the New York Times article about President Bush's call on the CIA to find ways to oust the Saddam Hussein regime of Iraq.

Editorial Commentary

-- "The racist dividing wall"

Center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (06/17) editorializes: "Israel is going against the current and the spirit of this century, which has witnessed the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the fall of the most racist division in South Africa. This is only so Israel can start its own stage of implementing the same hateful policy, as it is determined to be the last of all occupations and the last of racist entities. The Palestinians are not sorry to see their occupiers hide behind walls and electrical fences. This separation could have, however, taken place as a result of a final solution, whereby this dividing wall turns into international borders that separate between a free and independent Palestine and the Hebrew state. It is sad that these racist plans of isolation have not received the international and American condemnation they deserve. In fact the plans are understood by Washington in line with its policy of blind bias in favor of the Hebrew state. We condemn this policy of racism. We tell the government of rabbis and generals that their protective walls will not bring them safety and security, and that no matter how much they fortify themselves, the will of the Palestinians to be free and independent will eventually win."

-- "The isolating wall: Israeli aggression with U.S. blessing"

Daily columnist Rakan Majali writes on the back page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (06/17): "It is obvious that Prime Minister Sharon returned from the United States with ultimate support for his plan to build a dividing wall and to impose the ugliest form of racial discrimination. The interesting thing is the presence of this American cover and a false screen that talks about initiatives or ideas to be presented by the U.S. President. In our opinion, the Palestinian leadership and the Arabs must seriously consider this most dangerous move, and not be misled by these projects on papers, but to focus on what is happening on the ground in the land of Palestine."

-- "Israel's dividing wall: an attack on international legitimacy"

Daily columnist Mazen Saket writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (06/16): "Funny how this world sings the praises of international legitimacy, asks us to respect and abide by it and punishes those countries that rebel against it and refuse to abide by it. And there stands Israel, despite all the international legitimacy decisions that confirm the illegality of its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. There's Israel, setting up this dividing wall. Israel is actually setting the borders that it has decided for the Palestinian state, before the negotiations, before reaching agreements, and despite all the Security Council resolutions. Can we still talk about an

international conference and a settlement with Israel
on the basis of Security Council resolutions?"
GNEHM